

796 the wife or the widow (even though she be old), as well as proof of
775 the support of the shades for the husband or heir. A symbol of the
831 ritual connection, the *ilibalaga*, is offered to the shades of both
lineages. Indeed, the rituals of death and twin birth, as well as the
ritual of puberty and marriage, may be interpreted as a celebra-
tion of the union of husband and wife. For the parents of twins the
end of the ritual marks the resumption of married life after a break
during which contact between them was felt to be dangerous; for
a widow and the heir of a dead man the end of the death ritual
marks the beginning of their union.

796 The admonition of a widow or the mother of twins on her
proper behaviour as a wife,¹ like a girl at her first marriage, under-
lines the fact that the death and twin-birth rituals are, in a sense,
also marriage rituals.

592 The parts of the homestead connected with the shades are: first,
775 those associated with the procreative activities of husband and
wife—the hearth, the bed, and the doorway of the hut. Prayer
may be made at the hearth, and offerings are poured out on the
hearth-bricks, or left overnight under the bed. ‘The doorway is
the shades’ and much of the action in ritual takes place there. As
has already been shown, the hearth is explicitly associated with the
sexual life of husband and wife: hearth-bricks are planted at mar-
riage, making fire by friction is a symbol of the marriage union,
firewood is associated with a woman’s reproductive capacity, and
the hearth must not be approached by sexually active people other
than the owner of the hut and her husband. The bed is the mar-
riage bed. The doorway is identified with the vagina. Secondly, a
defined grove of bananas, usually those nearest the doorway of the
chief wife’s hut, is thought to be frequented by the shades. It has
been shown that plantains and sweet bananas are the symbols of
male and female in all the rituals: in the sacred banana grove only
plantains are grown. Bananas are propagated by suckers and the
symbolism implied (but never explicitly stated) is that the root at
which the offering of meat to the shades is placed represents the
lineage which continually reproduces itself. What is explicit is that
[778] the banana grove is sacred, and that offerings are placed or buried
at the root of a banana plant. We were told: ‘*ilikemo*² *lyabatata*

¹ We did not see this at the twin ritual observed, but were told that the mother of twins was sometimes admonished by her husband’s sisters.

² *Ilíkemo*: a single banana plant from the sacred banana grove, a ritual killing of cattle in the sacred grove of a chief; *inyíkemo*: sacrificial meat; *ifíkemo*: Holy Communion (modern usage).

kijenja, *ko bikwiputa*, the sacred place of the fathers is the banana grove, there they pray.⁷⁷⁵

The virility of a lineage is symbolized by the *ikipiki* medicine, interpreted as 'our blood' or 'semen'. With it mourners, menstruating girls, bride and groom, the new-born babies and their mothers are treated. To provide it or use it is to acknowledge agnatic kinship: husband and wife wash with it together in acknowledgement that the wife is now 'one blood' with her husband; the grandmother gives it to her son's child in acknowledgement of its legitimacy; in the death rituals the mourners eat food with it acknowledging their kinship with the shade. To belong to a lineage is to be protected practically and spiritually, and the *ikipiki* medicine is held to protect those who are 'empty' and weak—the 'hollow men'—from those who are 'heavy' with real semen or medicines. 796 602 789

The shade, *unsyuka*,¹ 'he who is risen from the dead', may be interpreted as the principle of life, but at the same time he is 'the one beneath', *ugwa pasi*, filthy, and fearful. What men worship is life; what they fear is death, corruption; and for the pagan Nyakyusa, as for the Christian,² the two are inextricably mingled. *Imindu* (sing. *ilindu*) means dirt, dust, rubbish, the litter of the seclusion hut, and also the shade. When '*mindu*' is cited as the cause of some disease it is the shades (as things rather than persons) which are meant: 'dust to dust' is an image of pagan as of Christian theology. We have spoken of the Nyakyusa disgust for filth (*ubunyali*), which is associated with a corpse, menstruation, childbirth, intercourse, faeces, and all these are identified in some fashion with the shade. Faeces 'go below to the land of the shades'. The hair of a corpse is the shade's, the hair of a girl at puberty is 'the filth of her menstrual blood'. In all the rituals the filth is buried, shaved off, burnt, washed away, and at the death ritual 'he who is risen' is brought 'to warm himself' at the family hearth, but yet he dwells in the earth and is 'dirty'. 775 [783]

The conception of impurity, uncleanness, associated with physiological functions of coition, excretion, menstruation, childbirth and death is, as we have already suggested, a very widespread one. 783

¹ *Ukuyuka*: to rise from the dead. For the noun the personal class is most commonly used, but some of the old men always spoke of *imiyuka* rather than *abayuka*. A young man, commenting on this, explained: 'The shades are not people like us, but *imindu*', i.e. they are things—dust—not persons.

² 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.' John xii, 24.

Village Life

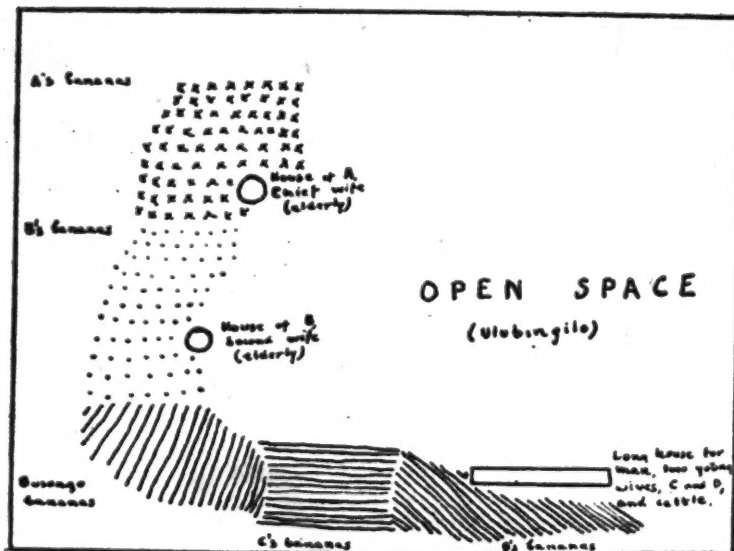
One by one the villagers emerge from the houses, and sit in the sun, greeting neighbours with a polite "Have you slept well?" if there are any neighbours near. Then the husband milks the cattle, and the boys come to drive them out to the pasture, where they will remain until the early afternoon, when they are again milked. 27
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[576]

Generally the cattle sleep in the same house as their owners, tied up to stakes fixed deep in the floor; but where there are grown-up sons not yet married, a separate house is built in which the parents sleep with the little ones, while the young men guard the cattle from raiding thieves. 231
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The bed is frequently no more than a mat spread on the mud floor, with a single blanket for covering, and no pillow, unless it is a piece of roughly trimmed wood. The more prosperous natives, earning good pay in the employment of Europeans, have well-made beds fully equipped, in many cases even with mosquito nets hung from the roof. The poorer consider that they have made a great step forward if they have been able to save up enough money to buy a single blanket, and not seldom even that belongs to the father, the mother and children having to be content with meagre coverings of calico or grass mats. But the house is warm, often too warm, for the fire is always burning, the door is closed, there are no windows, and there is no ventilation in the roof; and all the inmates sleep with their feet to the fire, which is in the middle of the floor. 513
[354]

Here and there one will come upon rows of tiny houses, each built and occupied by two or three small 342
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Plan B



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The Homestead of a Rich Man

Each married man has at least one house and, if he is a polygynist, he often has several; young wives may sometimes share a house, older wives normally have one apiece. The land immediately surrounding a man's houses belongs to him and his wives and will be referred to in this paper as their "building site" or "homestead" (*akaja*). Each homestead is sufficient in size to hold not only the houses of one man but also his bananas and, maybe, a few small plots of beans, ground-nuts or some other crop as well; and it is there, under the bananas, that coffee trees are planted. But there is no room on it for the main gardens of the household. In the centre of every homestead is an open space (*ulubingilo*) carefully weeded and swept by the owner and his wives, who usually take great pride in thus keeping it clean.

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At some distance from the homestead—a distance varying from a few yards to two miles or more—lie the main gardens (*imigunda*) of the household, near those of other people. Each year different types of gardens are hoed together by groups of villagers; millet in one place, potatoes in another, maize and beans in another; so that the gardens of one particular household are scattered in different spots.

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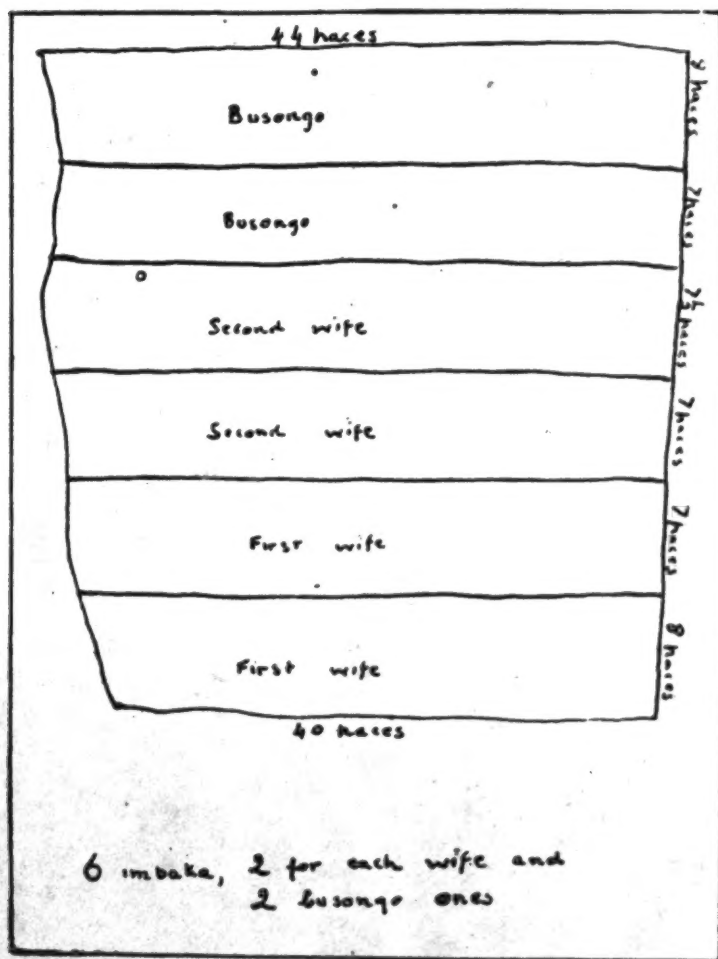
After the man and his sons have hoed the gardens, clearing the ground first if necessary, his wives are each given portions of their own to plant, weed and reap. In hoeing for any particular crop the land is

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divided up into separate plots (*imbaka*) all roughly of the same size, and one or two of these plots are assigned to each wife. There is no standard size for a plot (*ulupaka*), the only important thing being that there should be equality between the several wives of one man in the areas allotted to them.

The rights of a woman to dispose of the crops of her own gardens (*imigunda*), that is of the plots (*imbaka*) allotted to her by her husband,

Plan C



A Typical Bean Garden

5:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

THE LAND RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS AMONG THE NYAKYUSA 19

vary in different circumstances. Millet and rice, the two most valuable crops, belong to the man and are stored by him ; so that the division of a millet or rice garden into plots and their assignment to different wives is rather a division of labour than of property. But of all other crops the woman on whose plots they have grown is an effective owner. She stores them herself in her own house and no other wife of her husband can touch them ; it is only with him that her rights are in any way shared.

The main use of the crops which the Nyakyusa grow is to provide food for each separate household group. Next in importance is the provision of food and beer for hospitality, and for the making of gifts-both in everyday life and on special ceremonial occasions. And, finally, there is the barter or sale of surplus crops to obtain salt, pots, clothes, cattle and to pay tax. Each married woman, therefore, first uses her own crops to feed her husband, her own children and herself. If she is the only wife then she cooks for her husband every day, but, even if she is one of many, she is yet careful to cook for him frequently, in order to keep his affection and the various advantages which go with it.

When cooking for her husband she must, when necessary, prepare sufficient for guests, for a man very often has friends and neighbours eating with him ; and if he wishes to make a gift of cooked food, she cooks it for him from her own store. To provide meals for him and his guests and cooked food for gifts is an obligation which she normally fulfils quite willingly, as we have hinted above ; she may be fond of him ; it is in any case to her interest to play her part in the co-operative relationship which binds them together and from which both alike benefit. He hoes for her and builds her house, he gives her a share of the household milk, which he himself controls, he sleeps with and is gentle to her ; he has, without the aid of any legal, moral or conventional sanctions, a great hold over her, as she, on her side, has over him. But, if either fails to play their part in willing co-operation, then there are, for both alike, these other sanctions to fall back upon. A quarrel develops between them and leads to violence, perhaps he strikes her, perhaps she viciously repels him, one night, from her bed ; and then the immediately injured party appeals to the neighbours for support. They discuss the matter, censure one or the other, and try to make it up between them ; if they fail to do so the case may go to Court and one will then have to pay compensation to the other. Or it may happen, without any violent quarrel, without any formal appeal to the neighbours, that one of them becomes aware that his conduct is provoking their mockery and criticism ; and then in shame he mends his ways. Or, finally, one of them may fall sick and suspect that wrong-doing on his part has been followed by spiritual retribution in the form of witchcraft.

A woman, then, uses her stores of food to cook not only for herself

Unmarried children have the right to food partly in virtue of their general relationship to their parents, partly because they themselves assist in the work of the household. From the age of about six years boys herd cattle, from about eleven years they begin to hoe; while girls help their mothers in field work, in the fetching of wood and water and in the care of infants. And, owing to their practical usefulness, there seems to be less difficulty in getting motherless¹ children regularly fed before they marry than in getting them entertained afterwards. Each such child is allotted to one wife and is mainly fed by her.

In some households unmarried sons hoe only the particular plots of their own mothers; but in others the man and his sons work together as a team, hoeing each plot in turn. In ten neighbouring polygynous households I found that in three cases the sons confined themselves to the plots of their own mothers, in seven the man and his sons worked always together. Meals followed the same pattern as the hoeing. In the three cases the mother of each boy alone provided him with food, but in the other seven cases his step-mothers did also.

This variation of custom between different households was thus explained to me: "The custom of hoeing separately, each boy for his own mother only, is sometimes determined by lack of friendship between the women, sometimes by the slackness of their husband in hoeing. If he is slack about hoeing then it falls to the women to organize it, and each calls on her own son to hoe for her alone; and, in that case, if one wife has no son she will just have to enlist the services of other people to hoe for her (rewarding their efforts with food at the end of each day). Sometimes too the custom arises in this way—a boy finds that his step-mothers are reluctant to cook food for him when he comes in from hoeing, he complains that while his own mother cooks for him generously they do not, and so he begins to hoe for his mother alone.

"The custom of hoeing together, on the other hand, is determined by the will of the man, who himself organizes it. And whenever a man is vigorous in hoeing there you will find that he and his sons all hoe together. It is only when a man is slack that the custom of hoeing separately arises from the orders of the women, and if the man is vigorous in hoeing his wives are never reluctant and ungenerous about cooking, they bow to his will just as his sons do."

When their husband dies women pass to his heir. If the heir is a brother of the dead man then he takes them all to wife, if a son he takes

¹The custom of marrying two sisters and that of substituting a dead woman's sister or niece in her place considerably reduce the number of such "motherless" children, for the sister of a dead woman treats the latter's children as her own.

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768 all except his own mother, whom he either builds for at a little distance
587 and looks after, or else gives to a half-brother.¹ Inherited wives have the
[42] same land rights as others, and a mother for whom a son builds and hoes
is treated by him, in the matter of land, just like a wife.

737 —And a married man often supports an old woman—a mother, mother-
in-law or elder sister—whose husband, though still alive, is incapable of
hoeing and who has no unmarried sons. He may either hoe for her on
her own husband's land or else assign to her a plot or two of his own.

241 The gardens of a household are not only worked by its members,
476 other people assist them from time to time. Each married man usually
invites a group of his village neighbours to help him with a day's hoeing
two or three times a year, entertaining them to food and beer after the
work is over. A married woman likewise is often assisted by women
friends from neighbouring households in the planting, weeding or reap-
ing of her crops and then she rewards simply with a luxurious meal in
the evening, without any beer. Again, as we have seen, a married
woman sometimes engages a young man to hoe for her regularly, for a
month or more at a time, and pays him by feeding him well for that period.

241 But although this last custom is still common it is beginning to
464 decline; fewer men each year are willing to work for any length of time
except for money, and already in some of the more prosperous households
young men are found to be employed in hoeing at the rate of 2/- a month
in addition to their food. The young men who thus accept employment
in hoeing are always the poor ones, those for whom (whether because their
fathers are poor in cattle or because they have many elder brothers before
them) the prospect of getting married is too distant to stimulate them to
any great diligence at home. In the plain of Mungonde, however, where
ploughs are extensively used, the owners of ploughs make a considerable
profit by hiring themselves out with their ploughs at 2/- a plot (*ulupaku*).

241 Kinamen and affines also often assist in a household's hoeing. When
592 a man inherits his dead father's wealth then he assumes the position of
602 father towards his own younger brothers and is responsible for the
606 marriages of any who are bachelors; they then hoe for him and are fed by
his wives just as unmarried sons do. Sons-in-law, again, are expected to
bring their friends now and then to help their father-in-law in hoeing and
they often do so, more particularly if they are behindhand with the
marriage-cattle. After the day's work is over, however, they are enter-
tained just as sumptuously as an ordinary work-party of neighbours.

¹ And any kinewoman of his mother, (sister or niece) whom his father has married is treated likewise.

12: Bisgaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

BISGAARD

House-Types of the Nyakyusa

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by horizontal bamboo joists, at right angles to the principal beams of the ceiling. This ceiling never covers the entire room, but only the greater part, and always the part directly above the hearth. Up here firewood is placed to dry. A fine black basket is hung from the ceiling above the fire. Access to the loft is by means of a ladder. [342] [372]

When you read reports by the 'first' Europeans on these peoples and their houses, they always refer to a round house with reclining walls and a conical roof. Merensky (1894) mentions and illustrates such a house (pages 141 et seq.). Fülleborn (1906) mentions and illustrates several houses (Text Volume pages 376 et seq., and Atlas, plates 64-67). The inner surface of the walls of the house was decorated with patterns impressed into the mud layer which covers the bamboo poles. The three stones that form the hearth are shown, and also the bed behind a low permanent partition wall. These were exceptionally fine houses with beautiful, decorated and painted doors. The entrance had relief ornaments, often of coloured clay. Fülleborn notes that the mud houses are the dwellings of married people. [352]

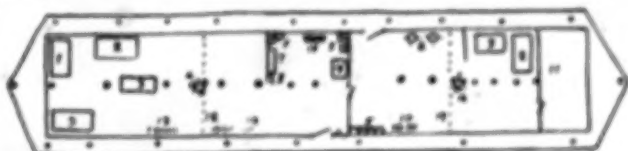
There is no doubt that the round house is the original type of dwelling. In 1955, I saw no round houses like the ones described by the above scholars, but I know that formerly they were often seen, at least as late as 1932. Professor Monica Wilson of Cape Town has told me that she saw them everywhere in 1932, but that during a visit to the district in 1955 she found only one single house of this type, in the village of Masoko. [178] [342]

At the time of my visit, round houses could be seen, but not the type having walls inclining inwards near the ground, and they were not by far as imposing as the houses mentioned above; and there were not many of them. I had the opportunity to make drawings of three houses, all occupied by old people. [342]

The round house is called an *isiaga*. In one of these *isiaga* there lived an old man whose wife, Malia, lived across the courtyard in a rectangular hut of the old Nyakyusa type (see infra). The husband's house was 6.5 metres across, and was divided in halves by a fence made from sticks. One half was where the man lived; it had one bed for him, and one for his grandchildren, who would come to visit him, now and then. Near the wall were two iron chests; also, a board had been hung at the wall as a roost for the chicken. A hen's nest, a small wicker basket, was placed about 3 ft. above the floor in the furcation of a four or five-pronged stick. These hen's nests are seen in all houses. The ceiling was supported by seven upright posts, seemingly placed entirely at random. The under side of the roof was strengthened by eight circular-running fascines of bamboo. In the centre, a heavy log (not bamboo) reached up to the pointed top of the roof. [542] [353] [352] [231]

The other half of the house was reserved for the cattle, three cows and two calves; there were five posts to which the cattle were tied at night. [231]

The house had an outer door at each end, but there was no passage from the man's half to that of the cattle.



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An *idagaga* in the village of Kiondola, the district of Rumungu, belonging to a man with two wives. The rooms have bamboo ceilings from dotted lines to either gable. Posts reaching to ridge of roof are filled in. 1, husband's bed; 2, wife's bed; 3, child's bed; 4, hearth; 5, hearth; 6, water jar; 7, room; 8, ladder; 9, table; 10, stove; 11, store-room; 12, dotted lines show limitation of ceiling; 13, small objects; 14, working material; 15, sleeping mat.

burn. On page 337, he reports how the boys, when 7 or 10 years old, will leave their parents' house to live in long, rectangular cowhouse-like houses big or small, in a special youngsters' quarter at the far end of the village. On page 338 he writes: In many cases you do not know for certain whether you are dealing with a youngsters' house or a cowhouse—for the cattle may well be kept in these houses—or the herdsmen may sleep in the cowhouses. However, this mainly holds true of the low-lying Konde country, while on the other hand, in the high country, the cattle is usually kept in the dwelling houses. On pages 371 and 372, he relates how the cattle is tied to posts at night, and he shows a picture of a cowhouse.

He also refers (on page 370) to the use of the rectangular house for married men besides the boys. The difference is seen in the fact that these houses are not roughcast with mud, as this work is the province of women. Finally, he reports that, during the last few years of his stay in the Konde country, he saw Konde houses being built under increasing influence of the coastal culture, in imitation of the Swahili houses. They were roughcast with mud inside and out, and had a verandah supported by posts.

In 1955, many *idagagas* could be seen. Some were for the cattle, but most were dwelling houses for married people. (Boys aged 7-10 and upwards until the marriageable age lived in *sambachile* boys' houses, the material of which was not bamboo, but a thinner grass, resembling bamboo very much. These houses stood

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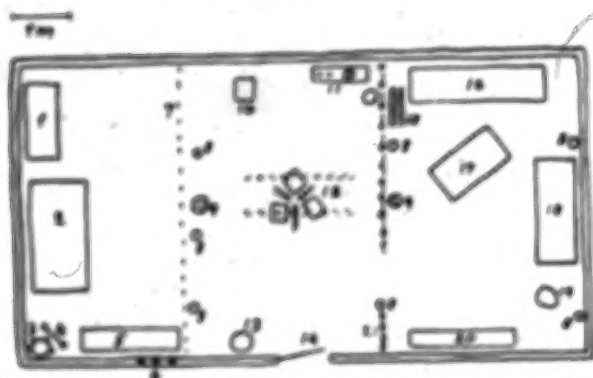
[349]

12: Bisgaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngondo FN17
Nyakyusa

Basin

House-Types of the Nyakyusa

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Basin's house: 1, cupboard with shelves; 2, children's bed; 3, hen's nest; 4, latrine; 5, room; 6, barred window; 7, from dotted line towards the right is the bamboo ceiling; 8, from here four 5 horizontal bamboo sticks on which the bamboo ceiling is supported; 9, Posts supporting roof; 10, chair; 11, low shelf with two bamboo jars and a water jar; 12, hearth with three hearthstones and sticks under ceiling for carrying the fire basket, and corn-cobs hung up to dry, etc.; 13, low jar; 14, door; 15, mat behind the low partition; 16, shelf for domestic animals; 17, child's bed; 18, latrine's bed; 19, baskets; 20, domestic quoniam; 21, low partition between rooms.

found. In the front part of the Kikola house, serving as an entrance room, were four posts called *Aligi*, to which two cows were tied at night.

This part, which we may call the cowhouse, also housed hen's nests, the roost, and the mortar to be used for maize, etc. [231]

The hearth, consisting of one square and two round hearthstones, was placed in the center of the living-room part. Here were also water jars and the woman's bed. This means that even if this type of house had a roof of a different shape and was always provided with a verandah with posts supporting its roof, the interior was really designed on the same lines as the short *idaghi*, but it was meant to house only one woman, or one man, as we shall see below. [354]

We may imagine that one of the reasons why the type of roof was changed, was the weakness of the pointed roof of the *idaghi*. It could often be seen to have a tendency to fall in, and had to be supported by a post. Even in Filleborn's illustrations, e.g. plate 64 v, a kind of reinforcement can be seen at the edge of the roof. No doubt the roof of the *idaghi* does not suffer to the same extent from this flaw. [542]

New houses were being built to this design, and I suppose that a little more than half the number of the houses were of the *idaghi* type, and a little than half the *idaghi*. 342 178

In the village of Iida, I surveyed three houses belonging to one family, a [361]